

PUBLIC NOTICE

THE U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY (EPA) SEEKS COMMENT ON A DRAFT EXPLANATION OF SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCES (ESD) FOR TEMPORARY STORAGE OF CONTAMINATED SEDIMENT IN “CELL #1” AT ITS SAWYER STREET FACILITY

EPA is seeking public comment regarding the continued temporary storage of contaminated sediment in a lined containment cell at its Sawyer Street facility in New Bedford, MA. Specifically, EPA is seeking comment on a waiver of a Massachusetts Hazardous Waste Regulations requirement that the containment cell have a double liner rather than the single liner that presently exists. EPA believes that the existing single liner, in combination with site conditions and facility monitoring, has been equally protective as a double liner for the temporary storage of these sediments.

In 1988-89, as part of EPA's initial pilot study for the New Bedford Harbor cleanup, a six acre confined disposal facility (CDF) was constructed along the shoreline immediately north of Sawyer Street. The western portion of this CDF was modified during EPA's "hot spot" remedy to include three lined cells for sediment storage and water treatment. Sediment from the hot spot remedy was temporarily stored in cell #1 until 2000, when it was removed and disposed offsite. Since August 2000, cell #1 has stored contaminated sediment from various upper and lower harbor cleanups, and is currently capped with clean material.

Cell #1 was originally designed to safely hold the hot spot sediments, which had higher levels of PCBs (over 4,000 ppm) than the rest of the upper and lower harbor sediments (generally less than 4,000 ppm). The only change in cell #1 has been the replacement of its original double bottom liner with a single liner after the hot spot sediments were removed. Groundwater and air monitoring around the perimeter of the facility continues to show that no contamination is migrating from the area.

Cell #1 was most recently used to temporarily store sediments removed from the Aerovox shoreline area in 2008. Portland cement was added to stabilize the sediments prior to storage in the cell. In addition to having high PCB levels (but on average below 4,000 ppm), these sediments contain high levels of trichloroethylene (TCE). The TCE levels are such that the sediments are classified as hazardous waste, which is regulated under different federal and state regulations than PCB waste.

Due to the new bottom liner and overall site monitoring, EPA has determined that cell #1 is suitable for continued temporary storage of PCB and TCE-contaminated sediments, and such storage does not pose an unreasonable risk to human health or the environment. Through this ESD, cell #1 is only being authorized to serve as a temporary storage facility; a final disposal alternative will be developed in a future decision document.

A fourteen day comment period for submittal of written comments to EPA will be held from September 1, 2009 to September 15, 2009. Comments should be submitted in writing, postmarked by the deadline date, to:

Elaine Stanley, Remedial Project Manager
U.S. EPA – Region 1
One Congress Street
Suite 1100 (HBO)
Boston, MA 02114

or sent via e-mail by the deadline date to: NBH_Comments@epa.gov. Comments received will be addressed in the final ESD to be issued after the end of the comment period.

This ESD and other site information can be found in the Administrative Record located at:

EPA's Region I Records Center
One Congress Street, Suite 1100
Boston, Massachusetts 02114-2023
Monday thru Friday 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.

The New Bedford Free Library
(Reference Department)
613 Pleasant Street
New Bedford, Massachusetts 02740.

As well as on our website at: www.epa.gov/ne/nbh